update

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Two Palestinian factories constructed in first steps towards economic self-reliance

The completion of two modern fruit and vegetable processing plants, built and financed with UNDP support in the Gaza Strip, could mark the first steps in the economic recovery of the Occupied Palestinian Territories. The historic Israeli-Palestinian peace accord reached in September gave limited self-rule to the Gaza Strip and the city of Jericho on the West Bank. It called for massive aid to address the crippling economic condition of the two territories, but did not prescribe specific remedies.

UNDP

Palestinian engineers confer on the construction of the citrus plant in Gaza, scheduled to open in 1994.

"Economic development to go along with political self-rule is desperately needed on the West Bank and Gaza, if self-rule is to mean anything," says Timothy S. Rothermel, director of UNDP's Programme of Assistance to the Palestinian People. "Hundreds of thousands of Palestinians need jobs." The unemployment rate is estimated to be at least 40 per cent in the territories and could range as high as 50 per cent.

The Citrus Processing Plant is the largest technical assistance project ever undertaken in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. UNDP constructed the plant in conjunction with the Citrus Marketing Cooperative of Gaza. The Palestine Liberation Organization and Italy put the project together. The Italian Government contributed US$9 million and UNDP put in $2 million.

Located on the eastern edge of Gaza City, the plant is a state-of-the-art facility that will produce fresh fruit juice and concentrate for export and the domestic market from citrus grown in Gaza. It will open in 1994.

UNDP will also manage the plant for the first phase of its operation while training Palestinian managers, who will then take over. During the annual citrus season, the plant will be one of the biggest private sector employers in the Gaza Strip, employing up to 80 workers, technicians, engineers and administrative staff.

The second plant constructed by UNDP is the Beit Lahia Cooperative Vegetable Packing and Grading Facility for the Beit Lahia cooperative, one of the largest cooperatives in Gaza with 750 members. The new plant will sort, grade and pack tomatoes and potatoes to meet international standards. This will allow Gaza farmers to command better prices both domestically and internationally. UNDP has arranged for the training of technicians in the operation and maintenance of the plant.

In this issue:

New programme for debt management — European traffic jam — Slowing rate of new AIDS cases in Nepal — China looks to the ozone layer

UNDP takes on a new role with the UN International Drug Control Programme

All UNDP Resident Representatives are now dually designated as the Representatives of the UN International Drug Control Programme (UNDCP), under an agreement signed late last month between UNDP Administrator James Gustave Speth, and UNDCP Executive Director Giorgio Giacomelli. UNDCP is the recognized lead agency in drug abuse control matters worldwide. The new working arrangement is in-

tended to clarify, strengthen and broaden cooperation between the two programmes. Its success will depend largely on the UNDP Resident Representatives and the UNDCP Country Directors working closely together to tackle the issues of drug control and human development. This unified approach will help promote the objectives of the international community to curb illicit drug cultivation, production, trafficking and abuse.

The UNDP Representative must now keep informed on UNDCP mandates, policies and priorities. Specifically, the UNDCP Representatives will coordinate drug control assistance in the over-all context of development programmes. They will establish high-level contacts on behalf of UNDCP with government authorities, bilateral aid programmes, non-governmental voluntary agencies and other UN agencies. They will also provide advice to UNDCP on general political and socio-economic developments which may have relevance to drug abuse control issues.

Asia's rate of new HIV infection tops Africa's; Nepal at risk

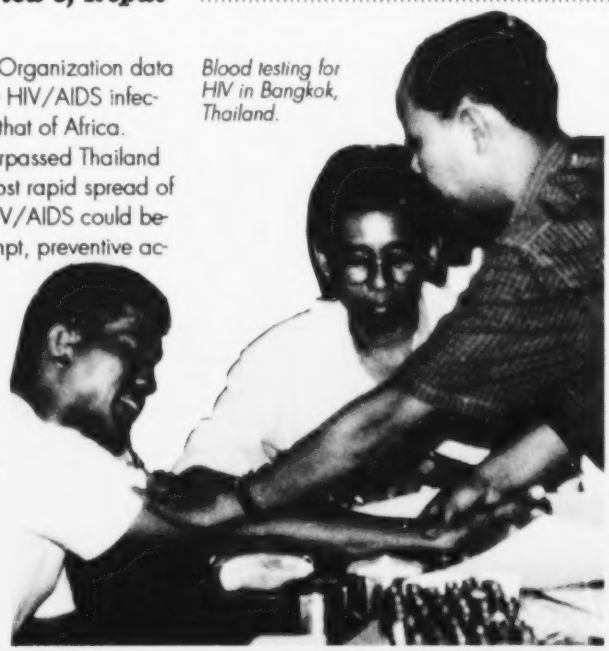
Current World Health Organization data show that the rate of new HIV/AIDS infection in Asia is overtaking that of Africa. Within Asia, India has surpassed Thailand as the country with the most rapid spread of the disease. In Nepal, HIV/AIDS could become a pandemic if prompt, preventive action is not taken now.

To date, Nepal has been spared the full impact of the HIV/AIDS epidemic, but the outlook could change. Major factors contributing to the potential spread of the disease in the country are its large numbers of migrant workers and commercial sex workers returning from India.

Economically, there is high income-generating potential within the sex market which has very few, if any, economic rivals at the village level. To control and prevent the further spread of the disease, efforts to design competitive economic situations that could slow down the expansion of the sex industry must be intensified, according to UNDP officials.

Currently, numerous local non-governmental organizations are helping to create HIV/AIDS awareness campaigns among high risk groups and are offering community education to stop the trafficking of girls. NGOs are also providing literacy and health education to raise the status of women, and training for income generating activities to ensure alternative means of income for potential sex workers.

To strengthen these various community efforts, the Government of Nepal requested technical assistance from UNDP to provide an integrated approach to HIV/AIDS prevention and control. The aim is to target high-risk groups and offer systematic economic, social and educational interventions to slow further spread of the disease.



Blood testing for HIV in Bangkok, Thailand.

Greetha Chuteow/WHO

New joint programme addresses debt management

The debt crisis of the 1980s revealed the importance of effective management of external debt for many developing countries. This was a relatively new field of development administration, but it soon became a central feature of governmental efforts to restore stability and creditor confidence in their economies. Because recovery from debt service difficulties has been uneven among countries and regions, the development of sound debt management policies and practices will be required both by countries still facing debt servicing difficulties and by those in a more comfortable situation.

UNDP has embarked on a joint venture with the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and the World Bank to provide technical assistance in debt management to developing countries. For many governments, the debt crisis is by no means over. Good debt management is critically important for sound resource utilization, especially in developing countries and the former Socialist countries.

This joint programme will help equip countries with the necessary policy framework, infrastructure and information systems for recording and monitoring debt, and for deploying and analyzing the data for policy-making.

The aim of technical cooperation projects under this joint programme is to bring countries' debt management capacity to satisfactory levels and to ensure that it is sustained. It will provide the policy, administrative and managerial defences against a recurrence of the circumstances which led to the debt crisis of the 1980s.

The distinguishing feature of this partnership is its recognition that the three major problems associated with debt management technical assistance in the past need to be addressed: lack of coordination of technical assistance, absence of a comprehensive strategy, and inadequate funding.

The programme also emphasizes capac-

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ity building. It will ensure that developing countries have access to new technological developments and to appropriate technical assistance. The staff will receive periodic training to upgrade their skills. There will be frequent exchanges of professional experience and information among developing country debt managers.

All countries seeking to strengthen their debt management capability can participate in the programme. It is likely to be of interest to countries with and without debt servicing problems, as well as to those that wish to maximize returns from effective borrowing strategies. Individual country activities will be initiated only when countries request assistance and identify specific funding possibilities for subsequent operational activities.

Sanctions against Serbia affect traffic through Eastern Europe

The US Government has contributed $850,000 in cost-sharing to UNDP to alleviate a serious transportation bottleneck on the border between Ruse, Bulgaria and Giurgiu, Romania. The traffic jam is a result of the UN Security Council sanctions imposed against Serbia.

The sanctions call on all states to prevent the import of commodities from the Federal Republic of Serbia and any actions that would promote the export of products to the Republic. The sanctions also include an embargo on the use of flag vessels or aircraft to transport goods in and out of Serbia, and an embargo on all business transactions involving the Republic. These transportation constraints have diverted and slowed ground traffic which would normally run through the former Yugoslavia.

As a result, it currently takes trucks about four days to cross the key border point between Bulgaria and Romania, one of the few open to trucks. Meanwhile, cattle on board the trucks are dying, and produce is spoiling. The 30-kilometre traffic jam is exacerbated by inadequate infrastructure and outdated customs procedures.

The funds, from the US Agency for International Development (USAID), will be used to finance urgent measures to expedite the transit of commercial traffic at the crossing, as recommended by a team of consultants UNDP sent to study the situation on both sides of the border. Three lanes of the existing dirt road at the present customs facility will be widened and paved. This will allow four separate entry stations, each capable of processing documents for three trucks at a time. A holding area will be created for trucks requiring import and export clearance procedures such as screening of documents, veterinary and agricultural checks and passport verification. Computer monitors will be installed for the passport police assigned to the new clearance and entry processing stations. These emergency measures are designed to reduce the traffic delay at this border crossing from four days to four hours.

UNDP

Sanctions against Serbia have slowed road traffic, leading to bottlenecks like this one at the border between Bulgaria and Romania.

Converting a factory in China to protect the ozone layer

The Tianjin Plastics Factory will be converted into a demonstration plant for the rest of the foam industry in China. The remodelled factory will test technologies free of chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs). Funding for this $1 million project will come from the Montreal Protocol Trust Fund.

Ozone depletion results from emissions of CFCs, halons and other chemicals into the atmosphere. It increases the amount of harmful ultraviolet radiation reaching the earth. The Montreal Protocol calls for developed and developing countries to phase out ozone depleting substances. A Multilateral Fund assists qualified developing countries in meeting the costs of complying with the phase-out provision of the Protocol.

Recognizing the importance of the Montreal Protocol, China is committed to eliminating the use of CFCs in non-refrigerating foams by the year 2000, and has designated the Ministry of Light Industry to oversee a CFC phase-out programme in the foam sector.

Technology using non-CFC chemicals as blowing agents in the production of flexible foams has been absent in China. UNDP has arranged and guided study tours for several groups of Chinese to learn about CFC-free technologies in the foam sector in the United States and Europe. Subsequently, the Chinese Government submitted project proposals to the Multilateral Fund for financial support. The Tianjin Plastics Factory is the first large investment project to be given by China to UNDP for implementation.

In 1991, China consumed 60,352 tonnes of ozone-depleting substances. More than 17,773 tonnes of CFC-11 were used in the manufacture of flexible and polyurethane foam. As part of the project, the Tianjin Factory will eliminate consumption of 180 tonnes of CFC-11. The existing production foam line will be modified to accommodate CFC-free

technologies. The plant will then be used to demonstrate and disseminate the technologies to other foam producers.

Approved projects

(all projects subject to modification; sums quoted in US dollars)

Myanmar – Union of Myanmar Programme – This programme, which constitutes the entire UNDP country programme in Myanmar, will address poverty alleviation in the remote areas of Shan state, Mandalay state and the delta in Ayrawaddy while ensuring environmentally sustainable use of resources. Quick impact projects to improve the health, education and water and sanitation conditions in the Chin and Rakhine border areas will be implemented. Vocational training will be provided for human resource development. In addition, support will be given to the national HIV/AIDS, malaria and leprosy programmes.

UNDP budget: $27 million. Funds will provide experts, consultancies, training and equipment for 15 individual projects. Executed and implemented by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN, UNDP's Office for Project Services, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and the World Health Organization.

Pakistan – Kasur Tanning Pollution Control – Kasur is one of Pakistan's main tanning centres, with 165 tanneries. This project will help reduce the production of effluents by establishing a common primary tannery waste treatment system. To ensure sustainable waste control, the Kasur Tannery Waste Management Board and Agency will be created and fully staffed.

UNDP contribution: $2.5 million. Third-party cost-sharing: $4.3 million. Funds will be used for training, engineers, urban planners, and the development of waste treatment systems. Executed by the Government of Punjab. Implemented by the Public Health Engineering Department, UNIDO and the Kasur Tannery Waste Management Board. (PAK/93/006)

Interregional project

INT/92/204 – Sustainable Development Network (SDN) – Reliable access to information relevant to economic and social development has long been a priority of all governments concerned with improving the living standards of their people. The Sustainable Development Network is a computerized information system which provides access to such information. This project will enable UNDP to continue to provide training, computer equipment, software, information packages and management tools to SDN sites. UNDP contribution: $1 million. Executed by the Office for Project Services.

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Contributions to UNDP remain flat for 1994, far behind targets

Contributions pledged to UNDP for 1994 are expected to remain at the same level as for 1993, or $920 million. This is about $340 million below the 1994 target of $1.26 billion projected by the UNDP Governing Council in 1991 when it called for 8 per cent annual pledge increases during the 1992-1996 planning cycle.

Pledges in 1993 were $245 million below Governing Council targets, noted UNDP Administrator James Gustave Speth. This has already caused an across-the-board reduction in programme spending of 25 per cent, when compared with original projections. Mr. Speth warned that the pledging results for 1994 may lead to further reduction in programming levels. The 1994 pledges and funding estimates were announced during the UN Pledging Conference for Development Activities, held in New York on 2 and 3 November.

"When our resources shrink, as they did between 1992 and 1993, it is the poorest countries which are most severely affected by cut-backs in planned and ongoing programmes," said Mr. Speth. Most of the contributions to UNDP are used for assistance to the poorest countries. Almost half goes to Africa, and 87per cent is dedicated to countries with per capita income of $750 or less.

International resources for long-term development activities are under unprecedented threat, said Mr. Speth. This is particularly true of resources available to the United Nations system. He cited weak economic performance in the OECD countries, expenditures for peacekeeping operations, and support for the reform processes in

Continued on following page

The Agenda for Peace requires an Agenda for Development

"It is time for the United Nations to reclaim its original mandate on the economic and social front," said UNDP Administrator James Gustave Speth in his remarks to the UN General Assembly's Second Committee. "The great goals for which the UN stands — peace, human rights, human dignity, democratization, environmental protection — can be achieved only in the context of development. The Agenda for Peace requires an Agenda for Development," he told UN delegates on 10 November.

Mr. Speth said that the greatest strength of the United Nations will always be in its moral — not military — authority. "And that moral authority is built on real service to people, helping them realize their aspirations for a better life, human dignity, and a future. The moral authority of the UN must not be allowed to be put into question," he said.

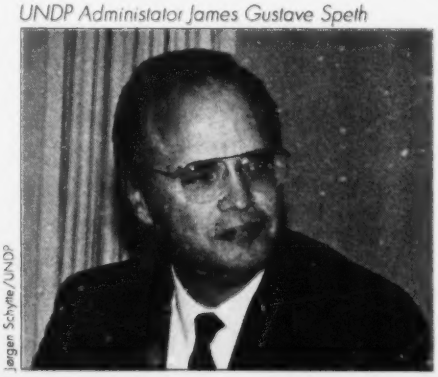
Mr. Speth described the world as "a disaster machine, producing crises with distressing regularity — crises like famines, ethnic and other conflicts, floods of refugees, extreme social disintegration, environmental disasters, and even failed states." He added that "dealing with these crises is expensive, sometimes bloody, and in human terms, invariably late." He said that it would be more humane and less expensive to "act preventively to meet threats upstream rather than to have them confront us as crises downstream."

He said, "The growing imbalance between short-term emergency assistance and long-term development aid is deeply troubling." In 1991, expenditures on UNDP reached approximately $1.5 billion, triple that of the $500 million cost of peacekeeping operations. However, the latest estimates for 1993 show a decline in the contributions to UNDP, while the costs for peacekeeping operations may skyrocket to an estimated $3.6 billion. The best estimates indicate that contributions to UNDP for 1994 will remain at the same level as for1993 — approximately $920 million.

"Sustainable human development is a precondition for sustainable peace," said Mr.

Continued on following page

UNDP Administator James Gustave Speth



Jørgen Schytte/UNDP

In this issue:

Achieving global food security — Human rights and the military in Ecuador — China looks towards a market economy — Monitoring global warming

Agenda continued from page 1

Speth. He later stated that UNDP embodies the principles of preventive development, and "the alternative is the spiralling costs associated with crisis management."

Mr. Speth called for a powerful reassertion of the social, economic and environmental roles of the UN. He expressed the need for a UN Agenda for Development as a complement to the Agenda for Peace. He said there was also a need for UN programmes to come together in a more unified force for sustainable human development, and urged an increase in the size and strength of the UN development efforts.

"In short, we need a powerful new commitment to preventive development and curative development — a commitment that can turn off the world's disaster machine."

Contributions continued from page 1

the former Soviet bloc as some of the reasons for declining levels of development assistance. "The costs of investing in development today will be a lot less than the bill for crisis resolution later," said Mr. Speth.

He noted that the need for reform and strengthening of the UN in the social and economic fields has never been greater. "This means reform of structure and governance within the system, as the Nordic countries have proposed, but also this requires that UN development work must be assured of adequate and predictable financing," said Mr. Speth.

He said that the shortfall "adversely affects the ability of developing countries to implement their own development plans and strategies for addressing the needs of the poor and the hungry, and for reversing the erosion of the environmental resources needed to sustain growth."

Because of fiscal time tables, most of UNDP's major donors were not able to announce their pledges for 1994. Mr. Speth urged these countries to pledge and to accelerate their payment dates. He extended his gratitude to the OECD donor countries which were able to announce their pledges: Austria, Germany, Greece, Iceland, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and Portugal. Mr. Speth also urged the larger economy countries to follow the example of the Nordic countries and the Netherlands, whose UNDP contributions represent large shares of Gross National Product (GNP).

"I would like to pay particular attention to the contribution pledged by a number of developing countries. These pledges, which are made despite severe financial constraints, speak clearly of the value attached to UNDP's programmes," said Mr. Speth.

He gave special thanks to Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bolivia, Chile, China, Honduras, India, Mongolia, Morocco, Namibia, Paraguay, Republic of Korea, Romania, Uganda, and Viet Nam for increasing their contributions. He thanked all other developing countries who announced their pledges and acknowledged the leading position that India has occupied as the largest non-DAC donor.

Mr. Speth also thanked those governments that pledged contributions to UNDP's associated funds and programmes which, as a group, received $46 million for 1994.

He recognized that some of the major donor countries are facing economic recession which has led to fiscal austerity and cuts in ODA budgets. At the same time, he said, "sustainable human development is the best investment we can make in global peace and security."

"Provision of a steady, increasing flow of financial resources for sustainable human development is not merely an act of generosity which can only be sustained when the economy permits," concluded Mr. Speth, "It is an essential investment in our collective future and in the world we leave to our children."

Food security linked with global human security

"**A**t UNDP, we plan to make helping the developing countries we serve achieve sustainable food security one of our primary objectives and major programmes," UNDP Administrator James Gustave Speth told the annual meeting of the Consultative Group of International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) last month in Washington, D.C. Mr. Speth said that global food security was "one of the greatest challenges humanity has ever faced." He urged CGIAR to "incorporate sustainable food security for the world's poor as the overarching mission towards which your research and other work is dedicated."

Mr. Speth said CGIAR's scientific work has been critical in feeding growing populations, but that it now faces more difficult challenges than ever before. While a continued growth rate in agricultural output of about two per cent per year would be enough to feed the caloric needs of the estimated global population by the middle of the next century, environmental problems will make this a very difficult task.

Scientists participated in a recent field day at the International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics, which is a member of CGIAR. The UNDP Administrator urged CGIAR scientists to work closely with farmers.

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He urged CGIAR to intensify its scientific work. It must also ensure that its work "put the poor first." He said that CGIAR can give reality to sustainable development through working "in close contact with the largest group of environmental decision-makers in the world — farmers."

He also suggested that the CGIAR call for the establishment of a global trust fund to ensure the preservation of genetic diversity of crops. Summing up, he said the key to global sustainable development is the elimination of poverty and food insecurity, the regeneration of the resource base, and the building of capacity in developing countries.

Human rights education for the military in Ecuador

UNDP and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ecuador signed an historic agreement late last month to launch an education programme in human rights for the Ecuadorian Armed Forces. This initiative, unique in the Latin American region, is an important step in fostering human rights in Ecuador.

Under the programme, officers and rank-and-file in all three branches of the armed forces will be schooled in the customs and practice of democracy and human rights. The training activities will be carried out by the Latin American Association for Human Rights (ALDHU), a non-governmental organization with considerable experience in the field of human rights in the region. UNDP is providing assistance to the Ecuadorian authorities for designing and implementing the training effort.

Senior officers have already attended one seminar organized by ALDHU. An additional 6,000 officers and military and civilian staff will be instructed on the suitable conduct of the armed forces. Also on the agenda are more general issues of the appropriate relationship between the army and society at large.

If all goes well, at the end of the two-year trial project financed by UNDP, ALDHU will work out a programme to ensure that human rights education forms part of the training of all middle-ranking and senior officers. The UN Centre for Human Rights in Geneva will receive support to monitor and evaluate this ground-breaking programme.

China's state-owned enterprises look towards a market economy

UNDP will be among the first multilateral agencies to provide direct assistance for Chinese enterprise reform. Problems of low efficiency and profitability in Chinese state-owned enterprises have in recent years grown more acute. Keeping these enterprises financially afloat has become a major fiscal burden on the country, diverting scarce resources which could be put to more productive use. The UNDP programme will bring in international expertise to help the enterprises get out of their current troubles.

The Chinese Government has targeted reform of the country's 13,000 large and medium-sized state owned enterprises — the core of China's industrial system — as a means for accelerating and deepening the country's general economic changes.

The UNDP programme, to last for three years, will initially involve about 20 large and medium-sized state-owned enterprises in Beijing, Shanghai, Liaoning and Heilongjiang provinces. A key area to be addressed is systemic reform of the corporate nature of enterprises, focusing on the separation of ownership and management to be achieved through conversion into joint stock companies and the formation of enterprise groups.

Reform within the enterprises will cover leadership and management skills of managers, investment planning and technology management techniques, and international business development. The 20 enterprises will be used as models for other state-owned enterprises throughout the country.

In addition, advice will be given on the transformation of government departments to allow the enterprises greater autonomy and to establish a competitive market environment. The experts are expected to start work by the end of this year. They will include accountants, management experts and engineers, depending on the particular needs of each enterprise. They will have worked or are working in large multi-national companies and have 15 to 20 years' experience in management positions.

New stations will monitor global warming and ozone

The World Meteorological Organization (WMO) has received $4.8 million from the Global Environment Facility (GEF) for a project that will operate a worldwide network of stations to monitor the changing composition of the atmosphere and acquire baseline data related to global warming and ozone depletion. This has taken on added significance given the recent announcement by WMO that ozone levels hit new record lows over Antarctica last month. GEF is jointly managed by UNDP, the UN Environment Programme and the World Bank.

Although there are a number of stations which already observe this global baseline data in developed countries, there is a dearth of such information in developing countries. The project targets the establishment of Global Atmosphere Watch (GAW) stations in Algeria, Argentina, Brazil, China, Indonesia and Kenya. Aimed at filling major gaps in the present GAW network managed under WMO, the six new stations will carry out a wide range of measurements of concentrations of major chemical components of the atmosphere including greenhouse gases and aerosols. The project will provide sophisticated measurement equipment, as well as training to those who will operate it.

Work is already well underway for the establishment of a GAW station in China. The station is expected to be fully operational during the latter half of 1994.

Approved projects

(all projects subject to modification; sums quoted in US dollars)

Zambia — Capacity Building Programme for Economic Management — This programme will help Zambia achieve self-reliance in development management by targeting human resources development and managerial reform.

UNDP contribution: $9.7 million. Third-party cost sharing: $4.6 million. Funds will be used for equipment, training, programme staff, experts to manage training programmes, and information management advisors. Government executed and implemented by the Cabinet Office, the Ministry of Finance, and the Office of the President. (ZAM/93/002)

Regional Project:

RAF/92/G34 — Water Pollution Control and Biodiversity Conservation in the Gulf of Guinea Large Marine Ecosystem — Harvests from the Gulf of Guinea have drastically fluctuated in catch size and species composition over the last two decades. This effort will evaluate land-based sources of pollution and determine the means for controlling these sources. These evaluations will be used to develop a regional approach for pollution control and environmental management.

GEF contribution: $6 million. Funds will provide for experts, equipment and subcontracts for training in industrial pollution management and treatment. Executed by the United Nations Industrial Development Organization and implemented by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

Interregional Project:

INT/93/201 — Sustainable Agriculture Networking and Extension Programme (SANE) — This interregional programme is geared towards enhancing capacity-building in sustainable agriculture. It will bring together NGOs and other existing organizations in Africa, Asia and Latin America to share experiences and information, express needs and priorities, and seek advice about collaborative activities in all areas related to sustainable development.

UNDP contribution: $1,500,000. Funds will provide training, equipment, NGO-based coordinators, and technical advisers. Executed by UNDP's Office for Project Services.

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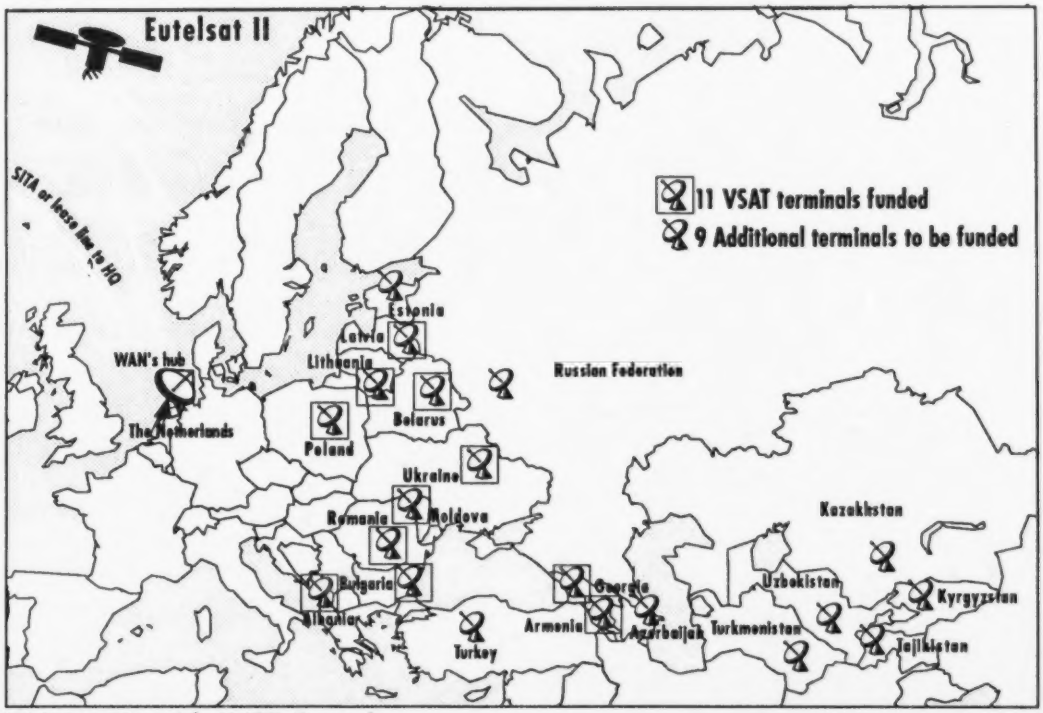
Building a communications network for Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States



Wide Area Network for UNDP's Division for Europe and the CIS.

In their efforts to make a transition to market economies and democracy, the countries of Central and Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) were early seekers of UNDP support. To provide that support, UNDP has created a network of country offices in the region to provide advisory and programme development services, and a satellite-based Wide Area Network (WAN) to strengthen communications among its offices, and subsequently, to support key actors of change in these countries.

In view of the complexity of change and the unprecedented nature of the needs, each country is constantly engaged in drafting, testing and adjusting socio-economic policies. To facilitate this effort and to provide the means for exchanges of experiences, transition policy advisors will be placed in some UNDP country offices in the region. Each policy advisor will cover a different transition policy topic such as democratization and governance, public administration reform and capacity-building, the social aspects of transition, and special issues of transition from centrally-planned to market-driven economic systems.

A transition policy coordinator, based within the Division for Europe and the CIS (DEC) at UNDP headquarters in New York, will serve as a central information agent for transition policy. The coordinator and the team of country-based advisors will draw on experience from initiatives supported by the donor community in the region, in shaping proposed policies. Equally important to the region's decision-makers and their external partners, this work may also contribute to other relevant policy dialogues going on elsewhere in the world.

This approach requires immediate and reliable access to information which emanates

In this issue:

Executive Board to replace UNDP Governing Council — Donor Conference for Viet Nam — Asia urged to expand trade — NGOs look beyond the Earth Summit

from within the region, as well as from sources elsewhere in the world. So UNDP/DEC has begun to establish a communications network in the region with support from the Netherlands and Sweden. The Central and East European and CIS governments have allowed UNDP to set up its own satellite-based Wide Area Network (WAN), which will eventually cover all the countries in the region. Funding has been obtained for a satellite-based system in 11 countries shown in the graphic. Funding is being sought for a satellite-based system to cover another nine countries which also appear in the graphic. A secondary network, already well advanced, uses the worldwide Internet system for data exchanges and will considerably expand the reach of the main WAN.

Once established in each UNDP country office, the WAN will increasingly be placed at the disposal of other agents of change such as parliamentarians, government aid coordination agencies, chambers of commerce, NGOs and the media.

This communications network has tremendous potential for providing a wide range of services. It will, for example, offer access to UN specialized agencies' databases on trade markets, patents, food safety, health standards, environmental issues and a multitude of other topics. It will extend access to databases maintained by academic institutions, governments and NGOs. It will link other large networks worldwide and bring value-added to a number of country and inter-country projects.

It will become a tool for the many facets of transition, from policy articulation to programme development, from the management of external aid flows to technical exchanges among specialists, from the region's integration into the world economy to support for local initiatives in remote areas, and from legal reform to public awareness.

New Executive Board to replace UNDP Governing Council

The Working Group on restructuring and revitalization of the UN in the economic, social and related fields, established by the President of the UN General Assembly, reached agreement on 29 November that will transform the governing bodies of the UN Development Programme (UNDP)/UN Population Fund (UNFPA) and the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) into Executive Boards. UNDP's new Executive Board, which will replace its Governing Council, will start functioning in January 1994.

The Boards will be comprised of 36 members each: eight from Africa, seven from Asia, four from Eastern Europe, five from Latin America and the Caribbean, and 12 from Western Europe and other States.

The Boards will be responsible for providing inter-governmental support to and supervision of the activities of each Fund or Programme. The need for a separate Executive Board for UNFPA will be further considered following the International Conference on Population and Development to be held in 1994.

The regular meetings of the Boards, which will take place between annual sessions, will be held at the headquarters premises of the respective organizations. The Executive Boards of the Funds and Programmes are encouraged to make the necessary facilities available as soon as possible.

The right to participate in the deliberations of the Board meetings, without the right to vote, will be given to a member state when its country programme is under consideration. The Executive Boards may also invite member States and participants of the respective Funds and Programmes and participants who manifest a special interest in the item or items under consideration to participate in the deliberations without the right to vote.

To help ensure transparency of the system, improved means will be developed by the Funds and Programmes for regular informal briefings and provision of information for all member states of the respective Funds and Programmes.

Arrangements will be made for a comprehensive review of these changes and their financing. These matters could be considered at a high-level meeting of the UN Economic and Social Council in 1995 and at the fiftieth session of the UN General Assembly. Such a review will include consideration of the effectiveness of the measures taken to improve the working methods of the Executive Boards, the possible need for a further modification in the size of the Boards and options for further improving the effectiveness and representation of these Boards.

This agreement was based on a text prepared by the Chairman of the working group, Ambassador René Valéry Monghe of Benin, following extensive discussions and consultations on the establishment, size, composition and functioning of the new governing bodies of UNDP/UNFPA and UNICEF. The text will be incorporated into the body of a resolution which will now go before the UN General Assembly for adoption.

Donor Conference for Viet Nam

The success of Viet Nam's strong economic reform programme and the country's strategy and commitment to a rapid transition to a market economy earned high praise from the international donor community during a two-day meeting last month at the World Bank's European Headquarters in Paris. Donors indicated their clear support by agreeing to provide aid totalling $1.86 billion, consistent with the requirements estimated by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund.

Viet Nam is strengthening incentives for economic activity and assisting in human resource development.

This Donor Conference for Viet Nam was co-chaired by the World Bank and UNDP, at the request of the government. This was the first such conference organized for the country.

H.E. Mr. Do Quoc Sam, Chairman of the State Planning Commission, presented a report on the progress of the government's economic reform programme since its adoption of the policy of renovation or "doi moi" in 1989.

The reforms sparked major improvements. Viet Nam has been transformed from a rice importer to a rice exporter. The increase in per capita GDP during 1991-93 was the strongest since the country's reunification.

Inflation was brought down from over 500 per cent to 10 per cent this year. The public sector had shrunk while the private sector had expanded.

The government acknowledged that while several reforms had been instituted to transform the economy from a centrally planned to a market system, there still remained a large agenda for further action. The government's strategy will concentrate on strengthening incentives for economic activity, building up physical infrastructure, and assisting human resource development.

The donors agreed that in order to sustain growth, Viet Nam should concentrate on the agenda for macro-economic reforms, especially in the fiscal and banking sectors, in property rights, inthe state enterprise sector, in continued public administration reform, in freeing the markets for capital and labour, and in liberalizing foreign trade. They underscored that Viet Nam also needed to provide a healthy enabling environment for direct foreign investment and for the private sector to function efficiently.

The Conference agreed with the government that the State Planning Committee would be the focal point for coordination, and the Ministry of Finance would be responsible for the management of external debt. UNDP would act as the lead technical agency for providing assistance in capacity building in general, and for strengthening aid coordination in the country. A Consultative Group chaired by the World Bank, and organized with the government and UNDP, would handle external aid coordination.

Asia-Pacific countries urged to expand trade and hasten growth

Asian-Pacific countries must mobilize their vast human and financial resources by expanding trade and investment, said Mr. Sebastian K. Zacharia, Chief of the UNDP Asia and Pacific Regional Programmes Division, addressing a gathering of development specialists from 10 Asia-Pacific countries last month. They met in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia to launch a $14 million five-year regional assistance programme on trade and investment in Asia and the Pacific.

Mr. Zacharia said these countries needed to rethink and adjust policies to generate income quickly to meet the challenges of "deep and pervasive" poverty in the region. "Expanding trade and investment in Asia is a critical pre-condition to tackling sustainable human development," he said. "In the new era of the 1990s, trade is no longer peripheral to economic growth and poverty eradication. It is now considered the engine to make change possible."

The programme will focus on creating or strengthening organizations in the public and private sectors to bring about changes in policies and practices in the trade and investment fields. Through cooperation among participating Asia and Pacific countries, countries large and small, rich and poor, could integrate into the world economic and trading system, according to Mr. Zacharia.

This will be facilitated through the UNDP-funded regional programme which will create links between the dynamic economies of North and East Asia and countries in South Asia, the Pacific islands and countries in economic transition, he said.

After the Earth Summit— Examining environment and development at the community level

An international NGO conference — Between the Summits: Down to Earth — to be held in Copenhagen, Denmark on 8-12 December will mark the most important event for the NGO community on the environment and development agenda since the UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), held last year in Brazil. The conference will provide a much-needed link between UNCED and the World Summit for Social Development, planned for 1995 in Copenhagen. It will examine NGO initiatives that were taken in preparation for the Rio conference and

explore other initiatives that have been launched in response to Agenda 21.

At least half of the planned 100 participants will come from developing country NGOs, and UNDP will help fund their participation. Among other issues, representatives will discuss the need for policy advocacy and NGO capacity-building in the developing world.

In addition, a one-day plenary session will be held during the conference to raise further awareness of the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, planned for next year. This special session will examine NGO activities for this upcoming conference.

To date, financial contributions for the Down to Earth Conference have been pledged by the Environment and Foreign Affairs Ministries of Denmark, the Environment Ministry of Norway, the Environment Ministry of the Netherlands and the Norwegian Forum for Environment and Development.

Approved projects

(all projects subject to modification; sums quoted in US dollars)

Morocco – Pilot Project: Participatory approach in Watershed Planning and Management – Agricultural development is a critical component of Morocco's economic and social strategy. The government requested UNDP support to help establish a methodology for involving local populations in watershed planning and management. UNDP will also help build national capacity to implement the approach. This methodology will be carried out first on a pilot basis.

UNDP contribution: $700,000. Government cost-sharing: $2,058,000. Funds will be used for training and equipment. Executed by the Ministry of Agricultural and Agrarian Reform. Implemented by the Hassan II Institute and National Research Institute. (MOR/93/010)

Global project:

Alternatives to Slash and Burn – Slash and burn (shifting cultivation) agriculture has been identified as a major cause of tropical deforestation. Slash and burn is a consequence of several complex socio-economic factors. This project will initially examine sites within the equatorial Congo rain forest, the Brazilian Amazon, and the equatorial rain forests of Indonesia. Biophysical research and socio-economic and policy research will be conducted at the micro- and macro levels and directed towards farmers, and national policy-makers. Capacity-building activities will be closely linked to the research agenda.

Global Environment Facility (GEF) contribution: $3 million. Executed by UNDP's Office for Project Services. (GLO/93/G32)

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